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CHRISTMAS

—Past and Present

BY ADAM HAROLD BROWN

children, and they filled them with their simple gifts, and hung them up with care. And in the morning eager children found them, and gathered round the donor with shouts of glee, for Father Nicholas had filled their stockings.

And so from Peters, in Lyons, has come the kindly custom of the Christmas stocking, and with it the belief in Good St. Nicholas. They call him Santa Claus, a name drawn from northern climes, but the kindly spirit is that of the Saint of Pausa who brought his gifts on Christmas Day, believing that, having given them to "one of the least of these," he also brought his gifts to Bethlehem.

They have gone, many of the old ways and kindly customs that gathered about the season. They have passed with the changing of conditions and conveniences of life, until they have become but milestones marking the passage of two thousand years. Only the heart behind them has not changed.

There are men who speak, bitterly, of our modern days, men who see nothing but evil where there should be good, crook where there should be kindness, greed of gain, and godlessness, and a world gone mad. To them, as to others, comes Christmas, with its eager-faced children, with its sick comforted, its refugees cared for, its prisoners, of body or spirit, visited.

A sad world, my masters, but not so bad as it might be, and not so weary or so mean or so hopeless, while men still hold to Christmas, with its gifts and its kindliness and its memories.

"Ah, but it is but one day a year," say the scolders. And if that sad thing were true, one day might yet leave the whole year. But men's hearts are not stirred by days or hours, and no one can measure that stirring, and the spirit of Christmas may yet save the world.

And so at this Christmas season the memory of Good St. Nicholas comes to cheer our days, to give us comfort and hope for the future. And we bring our gifts not because they are gifts but because we wish to give. And the manner of the gift means nothing and the giving everything; for Christmas is in the heart.



OUT of the past of nearly two thousand years ago comes Christmas Day. Strange customs born of many lands have blossomed around it to add their touch of sentiment and romance. Many myths and legends, many strange observances have been woven into the sweep and wool of Christmas Day. Many of these strange customs have come and gone, but the memory of them remains, a kindly thought that warms the spirit and ideals of that first Christmas Day.

The figure of Santa Claus has come of more recent years. Many countries claim his origin, many trails lead back to some suggestion of this jolly, kindly figure, but the main trail leads to Lyons, and to St. Nicholas of Patras.

Many, many years ago, in the household of good Nicholas of Patras, the elders brought their gifts just as the wise men brought them from the East. But in the household of Nicholas there were no costly holders, but they found the carelessly flung stockings of the

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